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**Interviewer:** Larry Massie  
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Larry This is Larry B. Massie. It is March 28, 2012, and I am interviewing Dr. Herbert Benson in his office in Boston, Massachusetts. I'll start, Dr. Benson, by asking you some biographical information about your early life before you met John.

Herb How far back?

Larry You don't have to make it exhaustive.

Herb I was born in Yonkers, New York. Went to public schools there, then to Wesleyan University in Connecticut, and then Harvard Medical School. Interned out in Seattle, then two years in the public health service in Puerto Rico, and since that time at Harvard Medical School starting in '65.

Larry '65, okay.

Herb Actually graduated in '61, four years away, then back at Harvard Medical School.

Larry And what was your practice at Harvard?

Herb I lost my dad my junior year in college. He died of rheumatic heart disease and that influenced me into going into cardiology; but early in my career focusing on high blood pressure I was noticing that I was unduly over-medicating patients with high blood pressure. Wondered what was going on and wondered whether or not the very physician encounter might be leading to high blood pressure. That was at a time when so called 'white coat hypertension' had not been defined.

Larry Oh, I see, because I have it.

Herb Off the record, we can cure you of that.

Larry Oh, really?

Herb Then I returned to Harvard Medical School to see whether or not I could set up an animal model for stress-induced high blood pressure. We worked with squirrel monkeys and using the paradigms of B.F. Skinner, rewarded them for higher blood pressure; and we were able to create by such a reward higher blood

pressure. Some of the monkeys would die, either of kidney disease due to hypertension, or strokes. Published that. This was kind of a breakthrough, because at that time it was felt that there was no relationship between stress and high blood pressure. Young people practicing transcendental meditation came to me out of the blue, saying, Why are you fooling around with monkeys? Study us. We can effectively, we believe, prevent and treat high blood pressure.

At the time stress was another universe. All medicine was either drugs or surgeries, and to bring in a mind/body relationship was beyond the pale. So I said no to these people practicing transcendental meditation, and I went on; but they wouldn't go away. They kept coming back. These were days before institutional review boards, human studies committees. I didn't have to clear it with anyone. So, while I was at the medical school, I figured, Why not have a look? But I was very quiet about it, because I would bring them in on the evenings, bring them in through a side door, because meditation was another universe.

Larry Were you afraid of the reaction of your colleagues?

Herb I was already being told my career was in jeopardy studying stress, and meditation was even farther out.

We measured their overall metabolism, their blood pressure, their heart rate, the rate of their breathing, obviously the amount of oxygen they were consuming. That's the overall metabolism. Brain waves, electroencephalograms, electrocardiograms, rate of breathing. We found a distinctive pattern: that it was heart rate, metabolism, blood pressure, rate of breathing, slower brain waves; they all marked a decrease, a quiet state that we felt had never been described before.

In one of those serendipitous events, the very rooms at Harvard Medical School in which I was studying these young healthy people was the room 50 years before in the 1910's, and 1920's, Walter B. Cannon had described the fight or flight response, the stress response. It struck me that whatever is going on here, if it is an innate bodily capacity, transcendental meditation should not be the only way to evoke it. So I looked at what were the basic steps of meditation. Ultimately, it boiled down to a few. The first were a quiet environment, a resting posture, a repetition, and the disregard of other thoughts when they came to mind. Eventually, it came down to two, the repetition and the disregard of other thoughts. Now what these two steps were doing, and this is fundamental, is breaking the train of everyday thinking. Then I said, What are the historical precedents of this? And I was not trained in this at all. Excuse me. (Phone call)

Herb We might be interrupted as we go.

Larry That's okay.

Herb While in college at Wesleyan as a junior, I decided I wanted to write a paper on whether God existed or not—arrogance of the young—and I struggled and

struggled, and got nowhere until I read the Varieties of Religious Experiences by William James. Suddenly I saw that, either people were having a mass psychotic reaction, or there's a capacity, a commonality, in finding a religious experience. Put that to bed.

Ten years forward, finding these physiologic responses opposite to the fight or flight response; seeing the repetition, I thought prayer. And all of William James', previous writings came to mind. I started a systematic, culture-by-culture search to see whether these two steps were involved—and it was universal. Every single culture of humankind had a repetitive type of action in it, be it a prayer, be it yoga, tai chi, and I got frightened. I was in another realm that I was unprepared to deal with and it was, I thought, fundamentally important.

I went to see the Dean of the Harvard Divinity School to ask his opinion. Stendahl was his name. Tall, Ichabod Crane-like figure, 6 feet 6 inches, bent over, and he had his desk on a platform, a rectangular desk, and down below, a step below, was a deep sofa. I told him my problem. He stood up, came off the platform, came towering over me and my sofa, put a hand on my shoulder and said, "Young man, religion was here before you. Religion will be here after you. Don't worry whether you're undermining it by science at all. You do your thing and we'll do ours." I was blessed, if you will. The earliest we found came from the Upanishads; and with meditation in Judaism in the time of the second temple with (inaudible); in Christianity going back to the time of the desert fathers with repetitive prayer; and Islam and eastern religions, namely Zen, Buddhism, Shinto. It was a commonality. When I saw that, I started getting upsetting letters from people in TM, saying that I had undermined what they were doing, and somewhere in the threatening realm.

Larry Now is this because you published some material about this, or how did they find out?

Herb I wrote a paper. They knew I was looking into it, and it was in '74 that I wrote an article. No, before '74. I thought there must be other ways, and I started writing about this, that TM could be . . . then these semi-threatening things were coming; and I thought why don't you put it all down? I wrote a paper called "The Relaxation Response in Psychiatry, and then a book which exploded and became a number one best seller. Many people learned of my work at that time. The Relaxation Response." Still in print. It sold many millions of copies. That's what introduced John to my work.

Larry He got a hold of the book.

Herb He heard about it. I mean, there was a lot of publicity at that time, and he contacted me.

Larry This is about what year?

Herb '75, '76.

Larry Okay, that's early on.

Herb Oh, very. We talked extensively and got to know each other.

Larry Can I take a little dog-leg here? This is just about the time when he took transcendental meditation and attempted to get the Tigers to do it. Do you think he got that from you?

Herb Great point. My memory is that John was exploring transcendental meditation. Then I wrote this work, which explained the ubiquity of what was happening in transcendental meditation, which I labeled the Relaxation Response. Many people, one of whom was John, who were looking for other ways of doing things came to me, because I gave a scientific base to what had been a nether-nether world of meditation.

Larry You legitimatized it.

Herb Harvard, you know. John explained to me that he is a scientist. He was into radio in the earliest days, getting involved in all sorts of things; he wanted to get to know more about me, because he saw me as a bridge between what had been far-out disciplines and science. That started our relationship.

Larry Now, did you meet?

Herb Yes, but first we got to know each other a bit, and he invited me out to Kalamazoo College. A lovely New England—it struck me at how New England it is.

Larry That lecture series he had going?

Herb I don't remember, but I remember going to an office in that complex that John had. Is that accurate?

Larry I think he did. It was about the time when he was involved in bringing lectures into Kalamazoo College on some of the fields he was interested in.

Herb I met John at Kalamazoo. We continued to talk on the phone, pre-email days, extensively. He founded the Fetzer Institute and invited me to be a trustee. Young man. I said no, because I felt it might be diluting to what I really felt was my major goal, namely continuing the scientific study of the Relaxation Response. So I refused that, but we stayed in close touch to each other.

Larry This is about the time when he was trying to get some legitimacy with his foundation, and that might have been part of the—

Herb In other words, I could be a legitimate type person.

Larry Yes.

Herb But we stayed in close contact, so that did not go away. The Institute evolved, and I continued to have some support from them because of my relationship to John.

Larry Now concerning that relationship, did he discuss with you any of his interests, paranormal?

Herb Very much so. I don't remember him using the word paranormal.

Larry He probably didn't.

Herb But he was using terms—I'm going back a bit, I can't be sure about the accuracy, but things that are not scientifically proven that many people believe that are there. So spirituality came into it. The measurement of this was critical throughout. I kept informing him, before publishing, of what we were finding with respect to what were the features of the Relaxation Response and the clinical situations in which we were demonstrating it was useful. I stayed in contact through that time, and had the support of the Fetzer Institute-Foundation.

Then as time evolved, things got very complicated politically, and it wasn't working anymore; that's why I tried to stay in contact with the Foundation. But it just didn't work. I stayed in contact with members, friendly, but the support, the financial support, terminated.

Larry But now correct me if I'm wrong: he gave you some funding about 1980, is that right?

Herb Yes.

Larry Okay.

Herb Just about right. Certainly, our relationship had been evolving. I'm not exact on that.

Larry Sure. But for a number of years he funded some of your research.

Herb Yes. In fact, I think I could even identify the years. Oh, I'm sorry. Did I mess things up?

Larry No, no.

Herb No, I don't have it with me.

Larry That's okay, because I can check the years.

Herb Around those years, yes.

Larry What was the nature of the funding?

Herb It was to study various aspects of the Relaxation Response.

Larry Did you study Tibetan monks? Was that one of the things?

Herb Yes. I knew you would be talking about this; so now I'm giving you a tape entitled "Advanced Tibetan Meditation, the Investigations of Herbert Benson."

Larry Well, thank you.

Herb You'll find we published some of that in Nature, published well. What I had noted is that people can evoke the Relaxation Response very easily. One of the most fundamental errors I've made was choosing the term "relaxation" for Relaxation Response. The fundamental feature of the Relaxation Response is a decrease in overall metabolism of the body, decreased oxygen consumption, decreased energy production. The initial term I thought of was bathyknosis. I looked at the fight-or-flight response. This state was opposite to the fight or flight response, so I chose the term Relaxation Response.

People, unfortunately, and rightfully, believe (from that term) that it's only relaxation. But there are scores of techniques that break the train of everyday thought through a repetition. That could be jogging, the high of running. It could be tai chi, qigong, yoga, scores of techniques that do this with a physical component; so it's not just relaxation. These are techniques, approaches, that have a repetition within them, and that repetition can be a word, or a movement, a prayer. There are scores of techniques.

Now to answer your question: How does something that you carry out 10 to 20 minutes, once or twice a day, have its long term effects to lower, let's say, blood pressure or other stress related disorders? In 1980, we published a work called "Decreased Responsivity to Norepinephrine with Relaxation Response." This was published in a prominent journal, Science. What we found was that, opposite to what we had hypothesized, when you evoke the Relaxation Response, actually your levels of norepinephrine increase, but without a change, without an increase, in blood pressure or heart rate. Here there is a decreased responsivity to this stress hormone. And that was a first clue of how things could be carried out long term.

It took several decades, to the current time, for us to fully understand this; and now we have published, showing that when you evoke the relaxation response, there is a change in your genes' activity. The more you do it the more this occurs: short term, little amount; people doing it for years, more or less permanent. What you have is this, and I'm now giving you a paper that we published in 2008 called "The Genomic Counter-Stress Changes Induced by the Relaxation Response."

Larry Isn't that amazing that that can happen? You can actually change your genes?

Herb It's a link that John would have loved: To say that the mind, the belief, could get into things that could actually change the activity of your genes. So we're coming full circle. We're showing now how doing something 10 to 20 minutes once or twice a day, regardless of technique, can evoke these changes, genomic activity changes, turning on, turning off certain genes. The techniques we studied for this paper involve various forms of meditation: transcendental meditation, mantra meditation, mindfulness meditation, various forms of yoga, Kundalini yoga, Kapala yoga, various types of prayer, the Rosary in Roman Catholicism, breathing, focusing on your breathing techniques. They all evoke these genomic activity changes, which points again to supporting the hypothesis that there is a common response opposite to the fight-or-flight response.

Okay, which genes are changing? Previously, people had studied genes being changed when you're under stress. The changes being brought about by these various and sundry relaxation response techniques were exactly opposite to the changes being induced by stress. Here we are, coming full circle, supporting the hypothesis. You've got the fight-or-flight stress response on the one hand, and on the other you've got the relaxation response; but it isn't necessarily a relaxing state.

To close the loop even further, what we have found is that the same genomic changes can occur the first time you do the relaxation response—minor. Do it for eight weeks—same but more powerful. Do it for years on end, people who pray or meditated regularly—even more profound changes. This means the more you evoke this relaxation response, the more you can actually change the structure, the elements in your body which are controlling all protein and everything else; and it's linked to metabolism. This John would have loved, because it was a coalescence of what he had strived for his entire life.

Larry Yeah, he really had.

Herb He recognized that. He said that, "Herb, I see in you a way of the future because this is just what I'm after. Would you consider being a trustee?"

Larry That's what he originally said and you turned him down.

Herb Yes, yes

Larry But then he believed in what you were doing enough to fund your work.

Herb Without question. And the funding continued until John passed away.

Larry Oh, did it? Until 1991.

Herb Then various political things occurred. No one's right, no one's wrong, but the relationship frayed a bit at that point. I was, as I told Bruce the other day, thrilled and honored by you at the Fetzer Institute, for an employee now being hired to recognize this, and wanting to know what my relationship was. Because it was, for me, a way of saying in my way, Thank you, John for recognizing what I was about. And it's a pity you're not here, but I can at any rate feel that I've been given the opportunity to thank John in this way.

Larry That's very nice of you to say so, and I appreciate it.  
Did he ever, if not initially back before 1980, at some time in your relationship, talk to you about some of his beliefs in the spiritual realm?

Herb I hope I'm remembering this properly, and it has to have the diluting effects of time, but John, I think, was a bit bothered by the fact that he had two aspects of his character. One was the good, solid, scientific, left brain, radio, which was supporting his life. He loved baseball. But he also had this other element where he knew something else was out there, and he was trying to reconcile these two aspects of him. He saw me, as he said, as a bridging element.

Larry Yes, okay. One of the things that he was really intent on, I think, was establishing whether consciousness survives death, and that can be taken in a lot of different ways, I know.

Herb We talked about that, and we left this aspect of our talk dangling. He knew I was searching out what might happen with advanced meditation. I had met with, for example, I had heard about G Tum-mo yoga or heat yoga, which is a form of Tibetan meditation in which people use a specific type mantra, and visualization, to bring about what I was thinking was the relaxation response.

As we started to talk of before, I could show you within five minutes how to evoke the relaxation response, you or anyone, by choosing a word or prayer or sound, then sitting quietly, closing your eyes, relaxing your muscles, the whole body, and then on each out-breath repeating your word, sound, prayer, phrase. It could be om; om mani padme hum; hail to the Lotus. It could be Hail Mary, full of grace; Ave Maria; the Lord is my shepherd; peace; love; calm; gentle. As you do so, you find other thoughts coming to mind. You simply say, oh well, and come back to the repetition. That evokes the relaxation response.



But we've also subsequently found on MRI, brainwave imaging, that there's a quietude of the brain, less static, less noise, and in that period of quietude, the thoughts that you have become impregnated and wired more powerfully. We base our clinical programs on this. We teach wellness strategies in that quiet period, also positive thinking, also compassion.

This is a relationship that I see possible, of reawakening our relationship with the Fetzer Foundation. Because I'm director emeritus; my chief, my boss, director, is Greg Fricchione. He's just written a full book, Compassion and Healing in Medicine and Society. He's the world's expert on employing this technique, namely we call it the RRRP. Relaxation Response Resiliency. The resiliency components are thoughts of compassion, what-have-you, so we're linking the two, going back. What happens in G Tum-mo yoga is, in that quiet period they visualize a heat from the greater consciousness. This was the sort of thing John was interested in; and they visualize that heat coming from external, coming into their body. They visualize their body sitting there, and then a course of energy, if you will, heat, flowing up and down a separate channel of the body, burning away the defilements of improper thinking. As a result of that, your body heats. How can you prove that heat? You can show in cold, freezing weathers that you can actually dry wet sheets, 3x5 wet sheets on your naked bodies, and get them steaming. That's what I wanted to study; that's what's on the tape I gave you, and was ultimately published in Nature. Monks in 40 degree Fahrenheit weather could get these sheets steaming. This has never been shown before. I've donated these tapes, digitalized them to Harvard University Medical School archives, so they will be there for all time.

Larry Great.

Herb You'll have access, but you want the original. That's the sort of thing that John learned I was interested in, and became even more interested in seeing me as this bridge.

Larry I have a theory that mankind has lost the ability to use certain instinctual things for some reason.

Herb I agree with you wholeheartedly.

Larry What I'm wondering is if, for example, bears can hibernate in some way.

Herb Okay, you're on target. Let me slow down a bit, and then come back to bears. Let me go backwards. I have been dedicated to the concept of the relaxation response and have come to believe and find that it is nothing new. People have been evoking it for millennia through these various religious and secular practices, be it different types of prayer, rosary, be it Greek worry beads, be it tai chi, qigong, yoga. This came to be ridiculed since the time of René Descartes, in the early 18th century, separating, due to religious reasons, mind and body. That's

been reinforced in western history, going back to the time of Louis Pasteur showing that specific bacteria can cause specific diseases like anthrax; then discovery after discovery, anti-tetanus toxin, insulin, penicillin, tuberculosis. We came to ridicule the whole mind-body concept of things, because we didn't need them, because drugs can do this. John and I shared a common belief that, wait a minute, there's stuff in the body that has to be described in terms that could be acceptable, namely scientific terms.

That's what I've dedicated my life to, but in so doing, had proven this — the lack of uniqueness of the relaxation response, because it's always been there. We arrogantly, intellectually, thought we did not need it, but we need it even more today, because the healthcare system is in crisis; 60 to 90 percent of visits to doctors are in the mind-body stress-related realm, poorly treated by drugs and surgeries alone. We have within us this capacity. That's all the more reason for bringing these worlds together. John and I would have smiled and giggled together over this as our goal.

Larry At the time when you were introducing this, and it was not being readily accepted by the mainstream, was there any understanding of psychosomatic diseases?

Herb Yes.

Larry I don't understand why there was such a jump from that into what you're saying.

Herb Good point. You have to go into the history of psychosomatic medicine. Psychosomatic medicine was feeling that thoughts, psyche, could influence disease, but they didn't have a technique to use; they became heavily part of, and still are a part of, psychiatry. They were using mind, and intellectual type of techniques. Had psychosomatic medicine, going back to the 1930's, 40's, known of the relaxation response, it would have been an accepted approach. This is my theory. But they didn't. It became the view within psychiatry, and psychiatry, in my feeling, came to see that psychotherapy wasn't really working in psychosomatic medicine, not well. Then psychiatry became heavily psychopharmacological. People who have accepted relaxation response are psychologists who aren't allowed to use psychopharmacologic medications. We became championed by them, but it was always science that has kept us alive. Now with the genomics, the ultimate science, that leap can now have an intellectual scientific basis, because 40 years of ours and others research has given it a scientific validity that wasn't there before.

Larry But even the old horse and buggy doctors in the 19th century had an understanding of placebos.

Herb You better believe it. They had the big purple pills.

Larry I still just can't understand why they were so reluctant to accept the mind-body connection.

Herb Because it wasn't scientific. In 1904, 1903, '04, in those years the Carnegie Foundation saw old medicine and said, That's not good enough. It has to have a scientific base. Back then, to get a medical degree you would have to learn the new stuff, but on the side they were still using placebos. And to that, in fact, I've written a book on this now. Let me give you a copy of this, called The Relaxation Revolution. This whole history is documented in chapter two, just what we're talking about here. Let me make sure it's chapter two.

Larry I'll read the whole thing so I'll find it.

Herb Actually, it's chapters three and four.

Larry I'm very interested in the history of scientific development.

Herb This is why it's ridiculed. I spent many decades evolving this.

Larry This is fascinating. You've done some wonderful work.

Herb Yes, but I keep saying this: Isn't it nice to be alive long enough to be able to see not only its evolution, but, due to serendipitous events, being able to thank some of my early partners? That's why you're here today, from my point of view.

Larry Right, yes, and from what I've learned about him, it would be exactly what John would have applauded himself. Because I don't know if he ever discussed Nikola Tesla with you, but that's some of the things he was trying to do.

Herb Exactly. I would always draw a little bit short, saying John, I can only do what I can study in the terms. But what's happened over these decades is that the technologies now allow me to do it; where I wouldn't have been allowed to be doing that, since it didn't exist. Another side reason of why I would feel funny about being a trustee, is because it might be under, 'old Benson's gone soft'.

Larry You have to be concerned with it. That's why John had this dichotomy, as you were talking about, of his business and his other realm of the spiritual. He had to compartmentalize them.

Herb That's just what I have spent my life to de-compartmentalize; that's why John and I shared this vision. But I have to stay honest to what allowed me to keep my feet in both worlds.

Larry Yes.

Herb It's taken 40 years.

Larry It's a tightrope walk, isn't it? Because there are always people, as you know, in any field, that would rather pull somebody down than pull themselves up. You come to that in all aspects.

Herb Now I think we're at a point where the world needs mind-body medicine. It's scientifically based and it saves money. It's cheap. You'll see in this book why we've titled it with Bill Proctor, Relaxation Revolution. It's time for this to occur because the world needs this. We're not talking about, and I'm shouting now, giving up drugs and surgeries. They have to be used appropriately and integratedly, like the three-legged stool. One leg: pharmaceuticals; second leg: surgery and procedures; third leg: self-care and mind, body and resiliency, is a fundamental feature of that.

Larry There's probably room for homeopathic and different things like that, too.

Herb Yes, because, as we were talking about earlier, many of the so-called alternative therapies are working, not because of the element, homeopathy itself, but *belief*. There's you see, it loops right back into the placebo effect, and you'll see there are several chapters in this book dealing with the placebo effect.

Larry I was running over in my mind all the various religions that you traced that seem to have used this repetitive mantra and things like that. I've got two questions. Do you see the rise of the priest craft as interfering with that natural understanding?

Herb It could, because being human, we want to be best. We've got a competitive element to ourselves. In Christianity, a prayer evolved which was the Rosary, Hail Mary full of grace. That becomes Ave Maria in Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, and that repeats. One repeats that, over and over again, and that evokes the relaxation response. In Islam, it's often in sha allah wa, so be it in His name, repeating. They, I believe, get to the same spot. But people now within Islam and within Christianity would rather kill each other over the choice of their word that brings about that state. That's a human thing. I saw this, and I felt—still do feel—in the Western church there is no better way to evoke the relaxation response than the Rosary. I went to Cardinal Francis O'Connor in New York to share that thought with him, and wanted to share it with the Catholic Church and with the Pope. He, Cardinal O'Connor, could not believe I was Jewish. What you are saying is Catholicism, it's the essence of things. He tried to set up a meeting with the Pope. At the time, access was being controlled by Ratzinger, who is now the Pope, and he would not see me because he felt meditation could not be the prayer. So, yes, to the first part of your question: formalized religion often makes prescribed ways of evoking the response, which might block a universality.

Larry What I meant by priesthood, I wasn't specifically talking about the Catholic Church. In most of these religions, there arose a body of leaders, who wanted to keep what they knew from the flock.

Herb Oh, I see. Yes, that has been an element. Within certainly the older religions and some recent religions, there are certain levels that one has to pass, and certain beliefs and actions that one has to go through for training.

Larry That gives increased craft power.

Herb Yes, that could be. Another human trait. Yes.

Larry The other thing I was thinking about, running through these religions was, most of those, the older ones in particular, they have this relaxation response. But I'm thinking about Calvinism, which goes in the other direction.

Herb I am not a religion scholar, but in reaction to Catholicism, Lutheranism and Calvinism and what-have-you evolved, and one could argue they wanted to give up those non-rational aspects, and it could go to extreme. That's occurred within Calvinism, and often would do away with the older practices of Catholicism, that repetitive relaxation response mode evoking thing. Yes, that could occur.

Larry Even praying to the Virgin Mary would be a relaxing type thing.

Herb Not a relaxing sort of thing, but evoking the relaxation response.

Larry I'm sorry, I'm misusing that.

Herb Just because what you're doing—normal thinking of relaxing. Yes, of course, that's the essence of it. There's this commonality. My way around this, and this is very personal to me, I do not know from whence the relaxation response comes within us. It certainly, on the one hand, could be evolutionarily derived. But it also could be God given. So I personally believe that it's a God-given type quality, and we, as humans, have chosen different religions on how to tap into it.

Larry Or have in one sense forgotten how to evoke it.

Herb That's what I hope this work will bring back, linking these two disparate analyses.

Larry Do you know the current emphasis at the Fetzer Center?

Herb I believe it's compassion.

Larry Well, in a way. Love and forgiveness.

Herb My approach to that would be that love and forgiveness could be better understood if contemplated and acted upon after one evokes the relaxation response to prepare the receptivity of these concepts; that's a study that should be done.

Larry I think they're moving on it. They're holding a big conference in Assisi, in Italy, coming soon, and bringing scholars from around the world to explore those ideas.

Herb Our hypothesis would be, the answer to that is straightforward: Prepare the soil. Till the soil before you plant the soil.

Larry You know, there are some people who believe that through meditation and—

Herb Relaxation response.

Larry Relaxation response, certain things can happen that go into the paranormal. I'm thinking, for example, astral projection.

Herb I have been approached over the decades by people to see whether or not we could study this type of projection and what-have-you. I now believe we're getting closer to being able to define genomically through the fMRI what is happening in these states. I've had a recent conversation with Andy\_\_\_\_; we knew each other for years, and he now is the head of an institute [at?] University of Newburg, whom you are funding to do fMRI's. He wanted has asked me to collaborate with him as he studies the effects of a Roman Catholic retreat in people. You probably even know this. One aspect is, at the beginning, then after a full day's retreat, then a week later, and years down the line, (and we were proposing to do the same thing), measure what's happening genomically. We are now talking about the possibility of collaborating together.

Larry How would you measure genomically?

Herb Blood samples. You measure the activity of the white cells within the blood stream and that is a good, a relatively good, measure of what's going on in the whole body.

Larry I see.

Herb You don't need a specific, let's say liver, specific to liver or skin. We're talking about what's happening throughout the whole body, and that's the changes that you have in this paper. We could see and relate that to what he's finding in the fMRI.

Larry That'd be interesting.

Herb Then we were thinking about, How would be the best way to approach the Fetzer Institute about this? And he said, I'll mention it, and I said, I'll bring it up when I'm in this serendipitous interview. This just happened last week.

Larry Isn't that something?

Herb It's phenomenal like that. That comes very close to being read as astral by some people.

Larry Yes.

Herb And you're here now.

Larry Serendipity is an amazing thing. It really is serendipity here.

Herb Look at just what's happening in this past week with Andy, Fetzer Institute, your coming here, a way of reawakening my relationship with John. Could that not be interpreted as a super-serendipitous event?

Larry John wanted to believe, and I think he did, that there's an inner knowledge that we have, aside from what we learn. As a matter of fact, one of the first times that he really kind of came out of the closet, as far as some of his unusual beliefs, was in the 1970's when he talked about decision-making as an executive with an inner knowledge.

Herb Okay, John and I talked about this in part. Subsequent brain data will support what I'm saying, have come to support. What we were talking about might not. The relaxation response evokes a state where your hardwiring, common knowledge, business sense, what-have-you, are shaken up a bit and rearranged; and out of that comes creativity. That type of quietude of the brain has been shown, and we've shown subsequently. We've talked about this before. John and I were saying, and that's what he, I believe, was calling inner knowledge. That's why the relationship of the relaxation response to that would make sense. And he sensed that. He would talk about the possibility of, sometimes these decisions would come out of a quiet state, and he saw that as a linkage, as well as did I.

Larry Do you think it could enhance sensitivity as well?

Herb Without question. You see the world differently. You see the world; it opens your mind in such a way that prepares you to see there are other interpretations of the same event.

Larry It's like a detective. If a detective came into this room, he would be noticing things that I'm oblivious to, and that's the kind of sensitivity that can enhance creativity in everything.

Herb That type of sensitivity could be learned. Let's face it, we all come from different eggs and different sperm. Some of us are more sensitive to that sort of thing. William James was getting into this, when he started his explorations of the paranormal and would be studying people who were seers in the sense. It's my belief that the relaxation response creates a climate for that type of different sensitivity to come about. How far does that go? It carries you into the extreme of what's called astral.

Larry Okay.

Herb But it couldn't be "not astral versus astral." They're a continuum. Some people are better at it than others. All I'm saying is that relaxation response enhances your sensitivity to move along that continuum, and, as an acceptable way of looking at that, creativity.

Larry Did he ever talk to you about people having psychic powers?

Herb The discussion was going along the same realm, because I've been saying this for years.

Larry That certain people have more sensitivity to things.

Herb Just what I was saying. Certain people were born differently, and sometimes you get a person who's functioning at both realms. The person I've met and gotten to know a bit who's best at this is the Dalai Lama, because he has a clear concept of the everyday world, yet he intuitively incredibly. What he's been able to do is do the two simultaneously, and I've never seen that in anybody before. That's what John was talking about. We never discussed this, but it was my feeling that John had a sense he had both capacities. He was kind of, if you don't mind my saying so, embarrassed to talk about that, because it was too much of another world.

Larry I think he would probably have been reluctant to discuss it with a scientist like yourself; whereas he gathered a group of people around him that were somewhat like-minded and he'd be more open.

Herb I was never in that club. No, maybe he was testing me by asking me to be a trustee.

Larry Maybe, yes.

Herb Could be.

Larry Did he ever talk about reincarnation?

Herb No, not that I can remember.



Larry Because he seems to have been quite interested in that.

Herb No, he may have referred to it, but I probably did not respond.

Larry I think he thought that he had been involved in Atlantis. That never came up?

Herb I cannot remember that.

Larry I think that that was probably something that kept him from really revealing his inner self to you.

Herb But what he did reveal in spades was the willingness and acceptance and desire to close that gap. That's why, with all these serendipitous events now coming back, I believe we'd be foolish not to explore what could be reawakened. Look I'm still here.

Larry Yes, you are. Very vital I can see, too.

Herb I'll be 77 next month, and how much longer? But I'm saying it's just probabilities.

Larry I've talked to some people that have seen John since his death.

Herb I don't know how to.

Larry I don't know either, but I was responding to the timing.

Herb Oh, yes. My way of approaching this, my way of reaffirming the relationship, would be to continue the avenue of why it started, namely making it more acceptable to the average person by putting it in a realm that could be understood. From my point of health benefits, love, compassion.

Larry Yes, forgiveness.

Herb You better believe it.

Larry Well, it's an amazing story, your life.

Herb Well, thank you. I find it so exciting that the Fetzer Foundation is doing this work and I will support it in any way I can. Let me know, please.

Larry Well, thank you. I want to make sure that I discussed all my questions. Do you recall any conversations about specifically that g Tum-mo meditation with John?

Herb No, no, but my understanding, my memory of that was that, if such simple techniques could evoke the relaxation response, what could advanced techniques do? We talked about my searching for ways to do that, and that resulted in the expeditions to India.

Larry This is something that you suggested to him that he'd maybe not thought of?

Herb Because I was introducing the relaxation response to him for the first time, and he was beginning to see there were different ways into it.

Larry I think I've got most of the things. It's been a fascinating interview.

Herb I've enjoyed the time with you.

Larry This is one of the things that has enriched my life. I'm not working full-time on this, but I've learned a lot.